

M42. Changes in population density between 1993 and 2030

Source: Instat 2013 and projections from Sourisseau et al. 2016

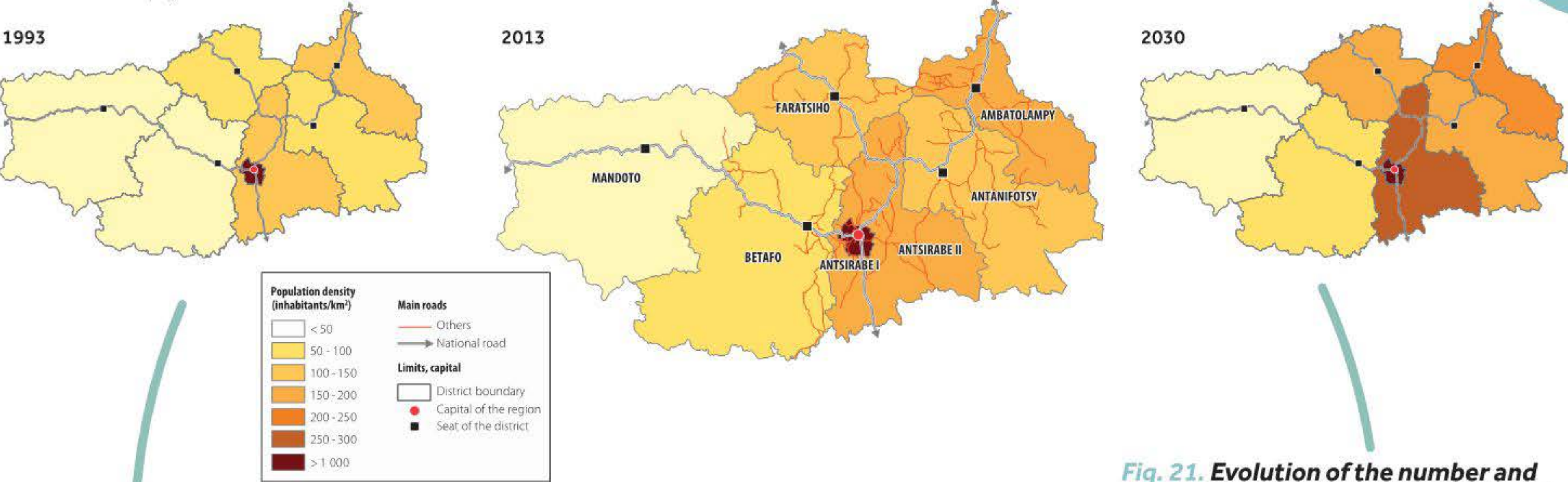
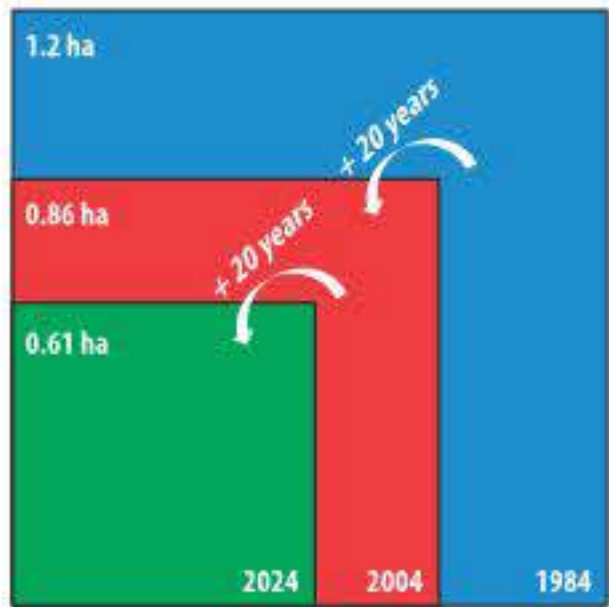
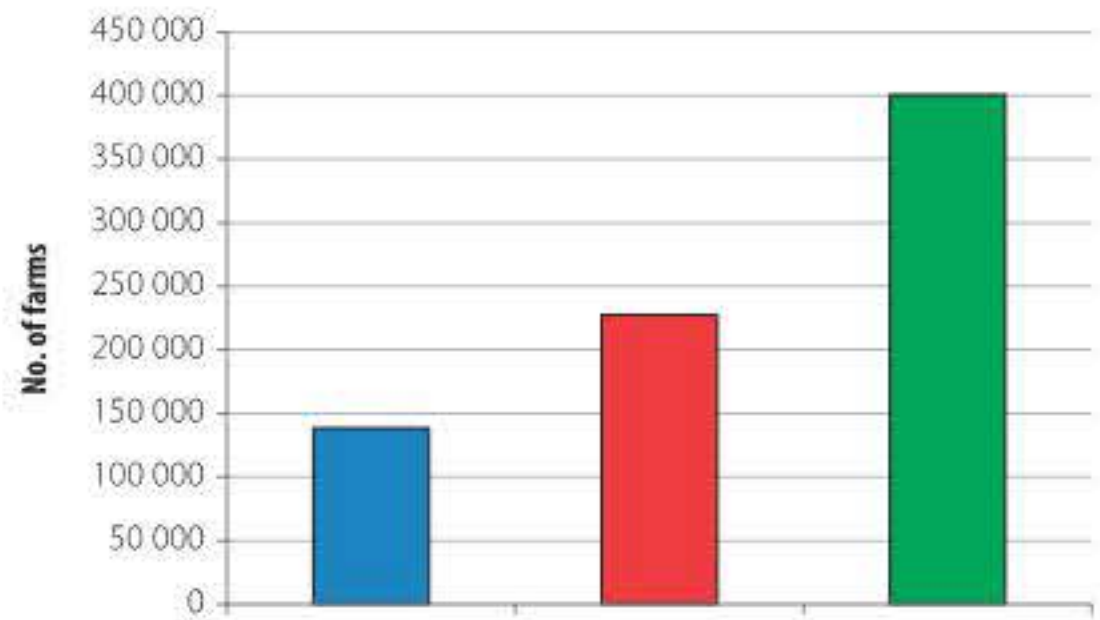
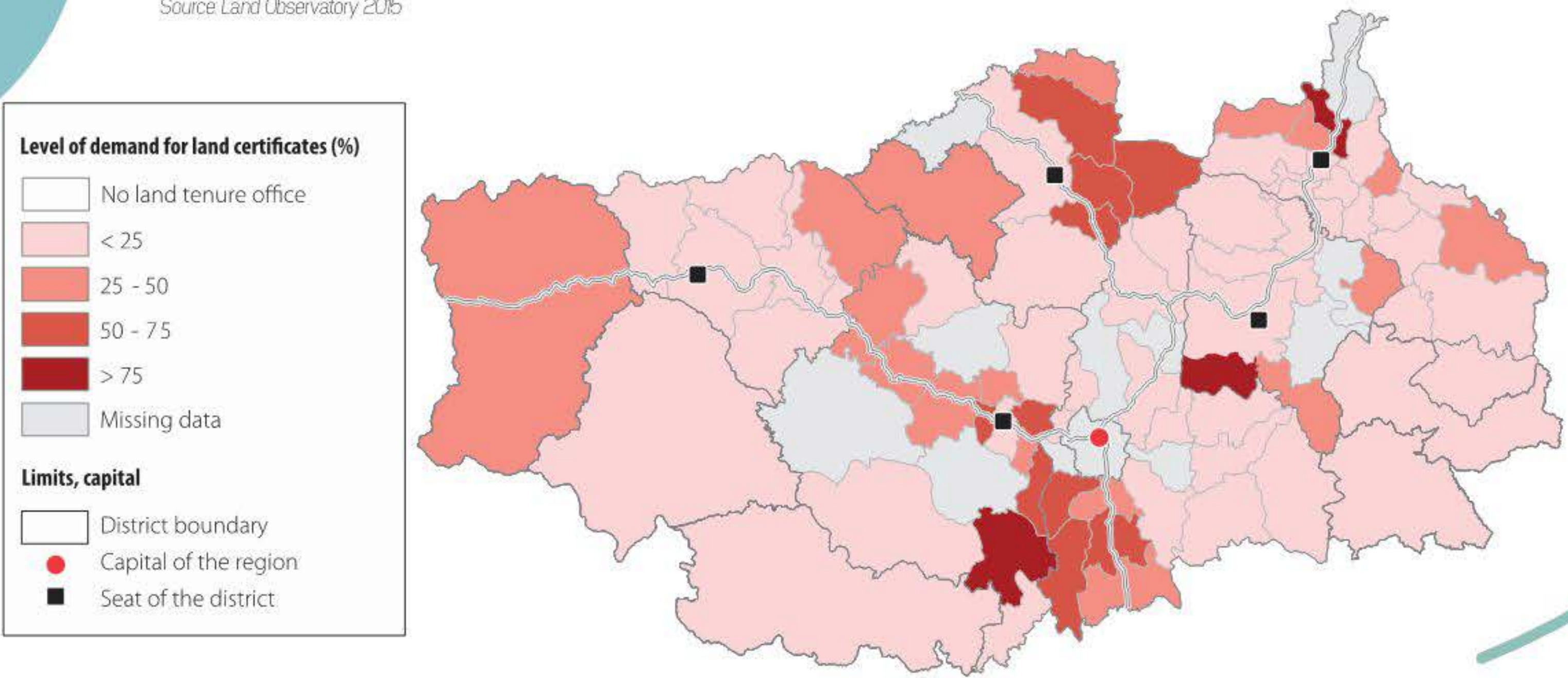


Fig. 21. Evolution of the number and area of farms between 1984 and 2024

Source: MAEP 2007 and projections from Sourisseau et al. 2016

M43. Requests for land certificates by municipality (% of households)

Source: Land Observatory 2015



THE ILLUSION OF ABUNDANCE: AGRICULTURAL LAND ISSUES IN THE VAKINANKARATRA REGION IN MADAGASCAR

High population growth is putting additional pressure on agricultural land and exacerbating the challenge of access to land for many people. Beyond the technical successes of decentralised land management, territorial approaches need to be consolidated in order to enable the implementation of assessments and concerted action plans.

• The paradox: smaller farms and an abundance of land

In Madagascar, of the 40 million ha (Mha) of agricultural land, only 3.5 Mha are cultivated and 10 Mha are cultivable. Despite this potential, average farm sizes, which are already very small, are getting smaller. By extending the trends observed in the last two agricultural censuses (1984 and 2004), the average size of farms could be halved over the next 40 years, falling from 1.2 ha in 1984 to 0.61 ha in 2024. The extension of agricultural land should help to remove land constraints on family farms, but to understand the real room for manoeuvre, it is necessary to move up to the regional level in order to conduct a detailed territorial assessment and to implement a forward-looking exercise more consistent with local realities and perceptions.

The Vakinankaratra region, one of the most populated and economically dynamic parts of the large island, provides a better understanding

of the gap between the land potential announced and the areas actually cultivated. In this region, as at the national level, agricultural population growth is high and is following the same pattern as demographic growth. The secondary and tertiary sectors, driven by the beginning of industrial development in the regional capital Antsirabe, are incapable of significantly absorbing the workforce from the younger generations. The majority of the population (86% of the labour force in 2012) still depend on agriculture for their livelihood, including people in urban areas. Consequently, even with a reduction in population growth, the number of farms would continue to grow and is expected to almost triple in the next 40 years.

• More and more farms, but little growth in cultivated areas

The very low growth rate for cultivated areas (0.9% per year over the 1984-2004 period at the national level) raises questions about the reality of access to land. Potential reserves of land are far away from where people currently live and situated in harsh environments: supply and demand for land rarely coincide. The western part of the region (the Betafo and Mandofo districts), which was the agricultural frontier in the 1970s, no longer seems to play this role. Infra-regional disparities in terms of population distribution, but also of infrastructure, services and quality of life, are very high: they are

the result of long-standing conflicts between precolonial kingdoms and then of colonial rule, but also of the prevalence of malaria and insecurity; and they are growing as time goes by. In 1993, population densities by district ranged from fewer than 20 people/km² to more than 100. If effective changes are not made, especially in terms of migration, this gap could widen by 2024. In the most populated areas, it is impossible to access new land through clearing because of a situation of saturation, serving as a reminder that uncultivated land is rarely free from rights and usage.

However, in order to absorb agricultural population growth by 2024 without reducing current average farm size, the cultivated area at the regional level needs to be increased by 95 000 ha. Without any readjustment, it should thus cover almost a third of the territory in the most densely populated districts (>200 people/km²)!

Since the 1980s, farms have been compensating for the reduction in their land, livestock and equipment by the intensification of labour (disappearance of fallows, double cropping, and optimisation of organic fertilisers). Despite this, the growing disparities between the prices of manufactured goods and those of agricultural goods, combined with political crises and climate shocks, are keeping most rural families in poverty. In these conditions, it is difficult for households to purchase and/or improve land of lower agricultural quality or to establish a new farm in a remote location.

• The challenge of access to land: the need for a global vision

Between 2005 and 2015, the land reform was based on increasing land security through the legal recognition of customary rights to cultivated land and the granting of new competences to local municipalities. In the Vakinankaratra

region, this commitment to decentralising land management has been partially successful: 83 out of 91 municipalities now have a local land office and most are still active despite the national crisis situation between 2009 and 2014. But the challenge of access to land, the focus of land policy for the next 15 years, remains unresolved. Since 2015, the region has been attempting to attract entrepreneurs by providing them with "secure" land within the framework of agricultural investments zones. But most of this land is proving to be already occupied by farmers. Knowledge about the areas available and about current rights and usage is still lacking. Facilitating access to land requires a thorough consultation process resulting in an agreement with rights holders at the local level.

Migration movements towards the least populated territories appear very limited because of strong socioeconomic ties with the territory of origin, the desire for access to minimal public services and fears about insecurity for goods and people. In order to stimulate readjustments that can boost development, policies must therefore focus on developing infrastructure and public services and investing in farms to facilitate their installation in territories where land is available, but of lower agricultural value. These policies should be driven by a global vision of territorial development, based on a reliable assessment of current realities and existing potential.

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